

Did the Prophet Think That In-Laws Were Evil?

by

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Argument:

We read the following hadeeth in Saheeh Bukhari, Vol. 7, Book 62, Hadith 159:

Narrated `Uqba bin 'Amir:

Allah's Messenger said, "Beware of entering upon the ladies." A man from the Ansar said, "Allah's Apostle! What about Al-Hamu the in-laws of the wife (the brothers of her husband or his nephews etc.)?" The Prophet replied: **The in-laws of the wife are death itself.**

If this isn't outrageous, then what it is?

Response:

What is outrageous is the level of ignorance of the person raising this objection.

This hadeeth is talking about the dangers of mixing freely with those from the opposite gender. The Prophet (peace be upon him) especially warned against the in-laws of one's spouse because in many societies today, people are lax in free-mixing and being alone with their brothers and sisters in law from the opposite gender when that should not be happening.¹

As for the usage of the word "death," Ibn Battal in his commentary on Saheeh Bukhari states:

وكذلك تقول العرب إذا وصفوا الشيء يكرهونه إلى الموصوف له، قالوا: ما هو إلا الموت، كقول الفرزدق
لجرير:

فإني أنا الموت الذي هو واقع. بنفسك فانظر كيف أنت مزاوله

وقال ثعلب: سألت ابن الأعرابي عن قوله: الحمى الموت، فقال: هذه كلمة تقولها العرب مثلاً كما تقول: الأسد الموت، أي لقاؤه الموت، وكما تقول: السلطان نار، أي مثل النار، فالمعنى احذروه كما تحذرون الموت.

¹ Imam an-Nawawi in his commentary on Saheeh Muslim, said:

وعادة الناس المساهلة فيه ويخلو بامرأة أخيه فهذا هو الموت

That is how the Arabs used to describe something that they hate. They would say: "That is nothing but death!" Just as al-Farazdaq said to Jareer:

"For I am death, which is real and has happened. See yourself how you are pursuing it."

Tha'lab said: I asked Ibn al-'Araabi about his saying, "In-laws are death". He said: This is a saying, which Arabs used to say, just as when one says: "The lion is death," that coming across it is death. Or as when one says: "The Sultan is fire," one should be aware of him just as you be aware of death.

So when the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that "In-laws are death," he only meant to overemphasize his warning against being lax in free mixing and being alone with our in-laws from the opposite gender, whom we should not be alone with. It was not an insult against the in-laws of people!

Thus, the person raising this argument has only displayed his ignorance of how Arabs used to speak back then.